
MUSEUMS

FINDING: The state currently operates two separate museum systems in two separate departments both headed by statewide elected officials. Both the costs and performance of these facilities varies considerably. The Legislative Auditor's Office found the functions of these systems to overlap and recommended consolidation of these programs

OPTION 1: Consolidate the museum programs of the Secretary of State and the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism under one agency. This action would not take place until new terms for elected officials begin.

Description And Background:

Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism – Office of State Museum

The Louisiana State Museum System established by R.S. 25:341 in the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism, Office of State Museums operates a total of eleven museums. Nine are in the New Orleans Area (Cabildo, Presbytere, Lower Pontalba Building, Madame John's Legacy, Old U.S. Mint, Jackson House, Creole House, and 1000 Charters St.) all of which are accredited by the American Association of Museums (AAM). The other properties in the system are the Wedell-Williams Aviation Museum in St. Mary Parish and the Old Courthouse in Natchitoches both of which have facility issues to clear up before they can reach 100% accreditation.

R.S.25: 342 requires that the Louisiana State Museum System shall exercise its powers, duties, and functions "in accordance with professional museum practices as established by the American Association of Museums."

- This system's projected total funding level for FY 00-01 is \$4,318,111. There are a total of 114 authorized positions (*See Table 1 - Appendix p. 5*). The cost per visitor ranges from \$13 for the New Orleans Museums to \$30 for the Old Courthouse Museum and \$62 for the Wedell Williams Museum (*See Table 2 - Appendix p. 6*).

Department of State – Museums Program

Five museums have been transferred to the Secretary of State pursuant to R.S. 36:744. These museums are the Old State Capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana State Exhibit Museum in Shreveport, Louisiana Cotton Museum in Lake Providence, Caddo-Pine Island Museum in Oil City, and the E.D. White Museum in Thibodaux.

According to state law, four out of five museum boards for the Department of State direct the museums to maintain accreditation standards. These are the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum, E.D. White Museum, Louisiana State Cotton Museum, and Caddo-Pine Island Oil Museum.

R.S. 25: 379.2 - R.S. 25:380.43 provides in pertinent part that the museum boards shall prepare a “budget and plan for funding sufficient to maintain standards necessary to qualify for and maintain the accreditation of the American Association of Museums.” Secretary of State Museums are currently **not** accredited by the American Association of Museums (AAM).

- For FY 00-01, these facilities have a funding level of \$1,647,550 with 31 authorized positions (*See Appendix p. 7 - Table 3*). Cost per visitor ranges from \$3 per visitor at the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum to \$60 per visitor at the E.D. White Museum (*See Appendix p. 7 - Table 4*).

Estimated Fiscal Impact: If the two museum programs were consolidated, total State General Fund savings are estimated at \$175,200, with elimination of 4 positions.

This estimate assumes that the on site administration of museums currently under the **Secretary of State** would continue due to the difficulty of establishing a centralized administration because of the distance between the sites. However, elimination of the museum program coordinator position would save **\$88,800** per year in salary and related benefits.

It is estimated that the **Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism**, Office of State Museum could eliminate 3 positions with a total of \$86,400 in salaries and related benefits (2 clerical positions - \$33,600 total; 1 information systems specialist – 52,800 total).

Action Required To Implement: Legislation would be required to consolidate all museums under one agency. The legislation should allow operation of a two-tiered museum system, which would encompass both accredited and non-accredited museums, specifying continued accreditation requirements for those facilities currently accredited.